

The mad race to war: Sending Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine, deploying NATO ground forces, using the atomic bomb

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In 2014, the centenary year of the outbreak of the First World War, the old debate broke out again as to whether the major powers had “slithered” or “sleepwalked” into the war, or whether they had deliberately started it. With NATO’s deployment against Russia, this question is superfluous. The European powers are not slithering into war, they are plunging headlong into it.

In recent days, leading European statesmen, military leaders, and opinion-makers have accused each other of not going far enough in the war against Russia. Like adolescent boys engaged in a test of courage, they have called each other cowards, sissies and useful idiots of Putin.

French President Emmanuel Macron called on his European allies “not to be cowards” after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) publicly contradicted his proposal to send Western troops to Ukraine.

Ben Wallace, British defence secretary until last summer, berated Scholz as the “wrong man in the wrong job at the wrong time” for refusing to deliver Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine.

Following the publication of an intercepted conversation between German military officers by Russian media, Britain’s *Telegraph*, the house organ of the Conservatives, wrote, citing a “diplomatic source,” that Russia had “identified Germany as the weakest link in the alliance and Scholz as a useful idiot to take Germany out of the equation.”

Scholz, for his part, boasts that no other country apart from the US has poured as much money and weapons into the Ukraine war as Germany. According to the Ukraine Support Tracker published by the Kiel Institute

for Economic Research, German aid commitments in the first two years of the war totalled €22 billion, of which €17.7 billion was for military purposes alone. The UK is in third place with a total of €15.7 billion, and France is in 14th place with €1.8 billion.

Scholz opposes the delivery of Taurus missiles only because he considers the timing to be premature, just as he once opposed the delivery of Leopard tanks before the Americans joined in. He does not want to expose Germany prematurely. On the other hand, he is expressly keeping open the option of later delivery.

The competition regarding “who is the most reckless warmonger” is also being played out within Germany itself. The state-owned and private media are campaigning around the clock for an escalation of the war against Russia.

On the ZDF evening news, Green MP Anton Hofreiter angrily accused the chancellor of his own governing coalition of a lack of leadership and weakness towards Putin for refusing to supply Taurus missiles. Defence lobbyist and self-proclaimed war expert Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (Free Democratic Party, FDP) even voted against her own government in the Bundestag (parliament), supporting an opposition motion calling for the immediate delivery of Taurus missiles to Ukraine.

The risks that Macron, Scholz, Biden, Sunak and all the other warmongers are taking are breathtaking. They are playing Russian roulette with the nuclear bomb.

There is an obvious contradiction in their propaganda. On the one hand, they demonise Putin as the embodiment of evil, the reincarnation of Hitler, who is planning to conquer all of Europe and is capable of any crime. On the other hand, they dismiss his repeated

warnings of the possible use of nuclear weapons if Russia's existence is threatened, calling them a "bluff" that should not be taken seriously.

Just as before the war began, they threw to the wind all warnings that Russia would react militarily if NATO continued its expansion to the east and continued to arm Ukraine, they are now doing the same in the face of warnings of nuclear escalation.

There is only one explanation for this behaviour: The US government, NATO headquarters in Brussels and the European governments are planning to use nuclear bombs themselves. They are seriously considering the use of weapons that have long been downplayed as a mere means of deterrence.

In 2014, they helped a right-wing, pro-Western regime come to power in Kiev and then systematically reorganised and rearmed the Ukrainian army. In this way, they deliberately provoked a military attack by Russia. They hoped to bleed Russia dry economically and militarily and bring the huge country with its vast natural resources under their control.

Now that the Ukrainian army is heading for defeat after hundreds of thousands of casualties, they are planning a further escalation of the war. The deployment of NATO ground troops, which is already underway on a small scale, the delivery of high-precision Taurus cruise missiles that can reach Moscow, the huge NATO manoeuvres on the Russian border, and the transformation of the Baltic and Black Seas into NATO waters are intended to provoke Moscow into a further military response. If the military and intelligence officials who have influence over Putin conclude that outright war with NATO is inevitable, they could decide that attack is the best defence and give NATO the pretext for a huge escalation.

That is madness. But the Schlieffen Plan, by which Germany prepared to conduct a two-front war in the First World War, and Hitler's even more reckless plans for world conquest, were also madness. Nevertheless, they were implemented and supported by the generals and the ruling class to the bitter end.

The foreign policy of the capitalist powers, especially in times of war, is not determined by Kantian logic, but by the class logic of imperialism. After decades of increasing social inequality and the accumulation of mountains of speculative capital, the crisis of world capitalism has once again reached a point where there

is only one way out on a capitalist basis: The violent redivision of the world among the imperialist powers and the brutal subjugation of the working class.

That is the reason for the support for war against Russia and genocide against the Palestinians by all parties defending capitalism. The pro-war policy is supported not only by the representatives of the corporations and banks, but also by the mouthpieces of the wealthy upper-middle classes that have profited from the stock market and property boom of recent decades. The trade unions, which have been transformed into corporatist apparatuses for disciplining workers, are just as much behind the escalating world war as the Greens, the SPD and the Left Party.

The Greens, in particular, are inebriated by widening war. In their early days they blockaded nuclear weapons depots. Today, they call the loudest for the atomic bomb.

In contrast, the working class and broad sections of the population reject the pro-war policy. According to an ARD Deutschlandtrend survey, despite the constant propaganda, 61 percent of respondents oppose the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to the Ukraine. Only 29 percent are in favour. Only the Greens and the FDP show a majority of their supporters favouring the delivery of Taurus missiles to Ukraine.

This mass popular opposition cannot, however, end war and mass slaughter and prevent a nuclear holocaust if it remains within the framework of the establishment parties and institutions. Averting a nuclear catastrophe requires the building of a powerful anti-war movement based on the international working class, which combines the fight against war and militarism with the struggle against social inequality and its root cause, capitalism.

This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and its international sister organisations in the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for.



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